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Programme performance in the biennium 2016-2017

Summary

In line with the results-based management approach promoted throughout the United Nations system, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) continues to consider the assessment of results attained through the implementation of its programme of work a key priority.

The present document sets out some of the achievements and lessons learned through the implementation by ESCWA of its programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017. It also highlights a few results attained through each of the seven substantive subprogrammes.

The Commission is invited to review this document and provide comments thereon.

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Introduction

1. In line with the results-based management approach promoted throughout the United Nations system, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) continues to consider the assessment of results attained through the implementation of its programme of work a key priority. The present document sets out some of the achievements and lessons learned through the implementation by ESCWA of its programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017. It includes an assessment of the performance of the executive direction and management and highlights a few results attained through each of the seven substantive subprogrammes.

2. The present document is intended to serve as an instrument for ESCWA member States to assess the results and relevance of the work of the Commission, as well as the implementation of individual subprogrammes. A self-assessment was first carried out by the directors and section chiefs responsible for each subprogramme. Results were then synthesized by the ESCWA secretariat. Performance has been verified using reports of intergovernmental sessions and expert group meetings, country papers and mission reports submitted to ESCWA; responses by participants to evaluation questionnaires for meetings, training workshops and seminars; feedback from stakeholders; media coverage of certain events; the number of hits on and downloads from the ESCWA website; and requests by member States for technical assistance and advisory services.

3. The self-assessment methodology adopted follows global methodologies for monitoring and evaluating programme performance. It comprises: (a) the establishment of baselines for indicators of achievement at the start of the biennium; (b) regular data collection to measure progress against those baselines; (c) regular monitoring of progress by management; (d) identification, from monitoring and evaluation, of lessons learned and areas requiring improvement for further implementation steps and future programme planning; (e) formulation of the main results for each subprogramme; and (f) identification of challenges, obstacles and unmet goals.

4. The Commission is invited to review the present document and provide comments and guidance on the overall performance of the ESCWA secretariat and of individual subprogrammes.

I. HIGHLIGHTS OF PROGRAMME RESULTS FOR THE BIENNIUM 2016-2017

5. In the biennium 2016-2017, ESCWA significantly expanded its work programme and reach, namely through the addition of 25 outputs under its regular budget and the establishment of a dedicated unit on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These new outputs were tied to an additional $1.2 million dollars received in 2017 for the implementation of the Strategy and Plan of Action on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the Commission in resolution 322 (EC.2) of 16 December 2015 and endorsed by the seventy-first session of the General Assembly. Additionally, ESCWA expanded its technical cooperation services through an increase in operational budget of close to $500,000 for 2017. These additional resources and outputs will be recurrent in the ESCWA programme of work until 2030.

6. The work of ESCWA contributed to stronger engagement by member States in the implementation of and follow-up on the 2030 Agenda. In addition to direct technical support at country level, capacity development and knowledge-building efforts, the 2016 and 2017 sessions of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development provided Governments and key stakeholders with a regional platform for peer learning and dialogue on development priorities. Through its strategic partnership with the League of Arab States, ESCWA also contributed to Arab States' growing interest in reporting progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as reflected in the significant increase in voluntary national reviews.

7. Throughout the biennium, a project to strengthen government capacity to respond to the needs of youth targeted Jordan, Kuwait and Tunisia. ESCWA also adapted the United Nations System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women to national institutions, which resulted in the first accountability framework for gender equality for the Arab region, now being piloted in Jordan. In addition,

a high-level panel was held in December 2017 to address illicit financial flows and the adverse implications of their cross-border movement.

8. In 2016-2017, ESCWA continued to build the capacity of Arab climate change negotiators. As a result, 13 member States have developed targets or plans related to climate change issues and the intended nationally determined contributions.

9. In partnership with the League of Arab States, ESCWA has engaged in the Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration and Refugee Affairs, including the extraordinary meeting in preparation for the September 2016 Summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants, which resulted in an outcome document stating the common position of Arab States on the subject. The document then fed into the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (General Assembly resolution 71/1 of 19 September 2016).

10. With the support of ESCWA, all member States have started producing SDG indicators according to the Global Indicator Framework agreed upon at the forty-eighth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission held in March 2017, and to their national strategies for sustainable development. All 18 ESCWA member States are also now able to provide at least basic estimates for national accounts, and 17 have requested the assistance of ESCWA in preparing for the 2020 round of censuses.

11. In 2017, the National Agenda for the Future of Syria (NAFS) Programme issued the Strategic Policy Alternatives Framework, which was produced with the input of over 1,600 Syrian stakeholders in order to prioritize stabilization initiatives in the country. The Framework is available from https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/events/files/spaf_synopsis.pdf.

II. CHALLENGES

12. The main challenge for ESCWA continues to be the political and security instability in the region. Although it has become increasingly difficult to engage in medium- and long-term development initiatives in countries suffering from difficult security conditions, ESCWA has launched projects to create platforms for development dialogue in Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Travel restrictions to Lebanon stemming from several member States have imposed limitations on hosting meetings at ESCWA headquarters, which has increased the unpredictability of operation costs.

13. Despite these obstacles, ESCWA has implemented its programme of work in a flexible manner, adapting to ever-changing conditions. The secretariat aims to continue delivering high-quality results and planning for the contingencies created by the region's political situation.

III. EXECUTIVE DIRECTION AND MANAGEMENT

14. In the 2016-2017 biennium, executive direction and management entities have implemented 29 out of 30 planned outputs (96 per cent). The main results achieved under the expected accomplishments that were set in the programme of work for 2016-2017 are briefly described below.

Expected accomplishment 1: Effectively managing the programme of work of ESCWA

Results achieved

15. ESCWA as a whole achieved an implementation rate of 99 per cent of 539 quantifiable outputs for the biennium 2016-2017, compared with 99 per cent of 465 outputs in the previous biennium. It has continued to work on increasing effectiveness in managing its programme of work. The secretariat has, for example, enhanced its use of the deployed administrative systems, such as Umoja, and its implementation of global initiatives, such as the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy for the United Nations, to modernize service delivery.

16. Five Development Account projects underwent evaluation in the 2016-2017biennium. The UN-SWAP on gender equality and the empowerment of women was taken into account throughout all evaluation processes. Finally, member States have expressed that the twenty-ninth ministerial session of ESCWA had successfully captured their views on its work.

Expected accomplishment 2: Increasing timeliness of the submission of documentation

Results achieved

17. ESCWA has continued to exert efforts to finalize parliamentary documentation well ahead of meetings. For instance, documentation for the twenty-ninth ministerial session was distributed, on average, four weeks prior to the session date, and timely issuance of documents received a rating of 4.29 on a 5-point scale in the evaluation of member State representatives. This was generally the case for all parliamentary documentation; it was supported by increased reliance on electronic means of delivery and the revamping of the ESCWA website.

Expected accomplishment 3: Identifying and addressing emerging issues that require attention by member States

Results achieved

18. ESCWA has continued to align its work with emerging regional and global priorities and to respond to recommendations raised by member States during intergovernmental meetings. Its twenty-ninth ministerial session, held in Qatar in December 2016, culminated in the adoption of the Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which provided a road map for Arab States to implement the Agenda while making room for its adaptation to specific circumstances and emerging issues at the regional and national levels. During 2016, ESCWA was given mandates to assist its member States in integrating the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development; provide technical support for leveraging means of implementation to achieve the SDGs; and facilitate follow-up and review. In implementing those mandates, it repeatedly brought emerging development issues to the attention of member States.

Expected accomplishment 4: Enhancing policy coherence in the management of the economic and social activities of the United Nations

Results achieved

19. ESCWA continues to be convener of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) for the Arab States, an important platform aimed at increasing coherence among United Nations entities working in the region. The twenty-second RCM meeting was held in Doha in December 2016; it focused on identifying joint initiatives and collaboration possibilities between the different participating agencies to better support member States in the implementation of the SDGs. The twenty-third RCM meeting was held in Beirut, in November 2017; it focused on devising an integrated, cross-sectoral approach to policymaking in the context of the 2030 Agenda, and reviewed ways of engagement with the United Nations Secretary-General's reform agenda. In the biennium, the RCM Working Group on the 2030 Agenda held one meeting, the SDG Data Working Group held one meeting and the International Migration Working Group held one meeting; they mapped activities in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In 2016-2017, ESCWA increased the number of ongoing coordination initiatives with other RCM members to six.

Expected accomplishment 5: Increasing public awareness of the work of ESCWA in pursuing regional priorities and emerging issues

Results achieved

20. ESCWA has pursued efforts to widen its outreach through a variety of means. The revamping of its website has rendered information more accessible to end users and the number of downloads has been steadily increasing over the years. ESCWA has also continued to communicate with the public at large through social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, reaching hundreds of thousands of users who interacted with its posts in 2016 and 2017. The secretariat has also ensured media coverage for a considerable number of activities and meetings and through the organization of press conferences and other media events, increasing the number of written and audiovisual instances of media coverage of ESCWA activities to 1,450 in the biennium.

Expected accomplishment 6: Building new partnerships and strengthening existing ones (with the purpose of broadening the outreach and impact of ESCWA activities)

Results achieved

21. ESCWA has continued to build partnerships with a broad range of governmental, intergovernmental, and non-governmental partners at the global and regional levels, through both formal and informal agreements. There were some 23 memorandums and letters of understanding, and contribution and financial agreements signed in the biennium, 7 of which were with new partners. These partnerships allow ESCWA to expand the reach of its normative and technical cooperation activities.

IV. SUBPROGRAMMES

A. SUBPROGRAMME 1. INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

22. Substantive responsibility for this subprogramme is vested in the Sustainable Development Policies Division. The objective is to achieve the integrated management of natural resources leading to improved food, water and energy security and enhanced resilience to climate change, and to mainstream the SDGs into regional and national policy processes. In the 2016-2016 biennium, 95 out of 95 planned outputs were implemented (100 per cent), and the main results achieved under the expected accomplishments of subprogramme 1 are briefly described below.

Expected accomplishment 1: Member States mainstream appropriate sustainable development goals into national multisectoral strategies and action plans for the integrated management of natural resources, including tools for measuring, monitoring and reporting

Results achieved

23. With the support of ESCWA, in the 2016-2017 biennium, multinational mechanisms were set: the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC) set out to collect data on regional water indicators through national monitoring teams and established a task force led by ESCWA; and the Arab Ministerial Council for Electricity endorsed the Arab Strategy for Sustainable Energy.

24. ESCWA also contributed to the development of methodologies in the 2016-2017 biennium, namely the Guiding Framework for the Environmental Dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region and the follow-up to the Arab Regional Strategy for Sustainable Consumption and Production, both adopted by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment. A high-level meeting was held in Amman in November 2016, on the water-related SDGs, aimed at increasing collaboration among water and statistical agencies to harmonize indicators and methodologies.

25. The work of ESCWA in the biennium has resulted in the development of several tools, including an online platform for knowledge-sharing and compilation of best practices in the field of renewable energy, to be integrated to the Sustainable Energy Marketplace of the International Renewable Energy Agency. Supported by ESCWA, in 2016, Jordan issued its Climate Change Policy for a Resilient Water Sector, within its National Water Strategy 2016-2025.

Expected accomplishment 2: Member States adopt platforms and resolutions on regional cooperation on shared water resources, energy networks and environmental sustainability to improve food, water and energy security

Results achieved

26. In the 2016-2017 biennium and with the support of ESCWA, member States adopted 9 resolutions, developed 3 platforms and implemented 5 different tools in the fields of food, water and energy. Meetings of the ESCWA committees on energy and on water resources were held jointly, in order to identify common challenges and responses and address the water-energy nexus.

27. The League of Arab States has endorsed the ESCWA project on promoting food and water security through cooperation and capacity development in the Arab region, as well as the ESCWA guidelines on shared water resources, which will increase regional cooperation on those issues. A regional network of national focal points was established by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment with the support of ESCWA, and a regional implementation plan for SDGs and targets related to the environment is underway. The Arab Permanent Committee on Meteorology has endorsed the Arab Climate Outlook Forum, coordinated by ESCWA. Finally, The AMWC requested the support of ESCWA to build the capacity of negotiators on shared water resources and establish a technical advisory working group on water-agriculture coordination.

Expected accomplishment 3: Member States develop coordinated policies, strategies and frameworks for climate change mitigation and adaptation and for disaster risk reduction to enhance resilience and respond to the impact of natural and human-induced disasters

Results achieved

28. ESCWA and the League of Arab States, in partnership with 11 other institutions, are still implementing the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR).

29. The work of ESCWA on the national and regional levels has led to the adoption of five resolutions and recommendations on climate change in 2016-2017. The AMWC adopted a resolution endorsing the RICCAR Arab Climate Change Assessment Report, one on the establishment of a regional knowledge hub on climate and water, and one mandating ESCWA to continue to train Arab climate negotiators. The Arab Ministerial Council of Electricity has also adopted a recommendation that solicits presentation by ESCWA of the outcomes of the conferences of the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and another on renewable energy and energy efficiency efforts in the Arab region.

B. SUBPROGRAMME 2. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

30. Substantive responsibility this subprogramme is vested in the Social Development Division. The objective is to enhance the capacity of member States to adopt and implement rights-based social policies that promote social justice and lead to equitable, inclusive and participatory socioeconomic development. In the 2016-2017 biennium, 78 out of 80 planned outputs were implemented (96 per cent), with one publication delayed and implemented by 1 April 2018. The main results achieved under the expected accomplishments of subprogramme 2 are briefly described below.

Expected accomplishment 1: Member States develop rights-based social policies and programmes that promote social cohesion, social inclusion, social protection and the provision of adequate social services for all

Results achieved

31. In the 2016-2017 biennium, the work of ESCWA continued to lead to the adoption of measures that promote social inclusion. Jordan and the Sudan passed more inclusive disability laws; Morocco and the Sudan reviewed their disability assessment processes; and Morocco took steps to enhance digital accessibility for persons with disabilities. Jordan also adopted policy guidelines on education curricula reform to better address youth unemployment. With the support of ESCWA and other stakeholders, member States adopted the Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development. Combined, these actions increased the number of measures favouring the social integration of vulnerable groups from 24 in 2015 to 34 in 2017. On social protection, ESCWA provided additional support that raised the number of measures formulated or enhanced to improve social protection or expand the provision of social services from 6 in 2015 to 8 in 2017.

Expected accomplishment 2: Member States engage in a regional consensus-building process on international migration towards the formulation and implementation of policies that maximize the development impact of international migration and foster intraregional coordination and cooperation

Results achieved

32. In the 2016-2017 biennium, ESCWA fostered the engagement of member States in two regional consensus-building processes on international migration. The position of Arab States on large movements of migrants and refugees was consolidated in an outcome document, which informed the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. The recommendations on regional migration priorities and challenges also informed negotiations on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. This increased the number of instances in which ESCWA promoted dialogue on international migration between Governments of member States from 2 in 2015 to 4 by December 2017. The efforts of ESCWA contributed to increase the number of policies that reflect awareness of the opportunities and challenges of international migration from 3 in 2015 to 6 by December 2017.

Expected accomplishment 3: Member States adopt a participatory approach to social policy formulation and implementation through consensus building, the empowerment of civil society and the engagement of civic groups and other stakeholders in advocating the values and tools necessary to achieving social justice

Results achieved

33. ESCWA member States are increasingly recognizing the importance of participatory approaches, consensus building and civic engagement for the formulation of just and sustainable policies. This was evidenced in the extensive engagement of civil society actors with government officials and other stakeholders in policy dialogues facilitated by ESCWA, which culminated in key messages and recommendations. The number of instances in which different stakeholders participated in such dialogues rose from 14 in 2015 to 20 by 2017. This progress was further demonstrated in the increased number of government entities and non-governmental organizations using capacity-building tools developed by ESCWA on participatory development, democratic governance, participatory social protection policies, social justice and equality, from 20 entities and organizations in 2015 to 27 in 2017.

C. Subprogramme 3. Economic development and integration

34. Substantive responsibility for subprogramme 3 is vested in the Economic Development and Integration Division. The objective is to achieve a decent standard of living for all people in member States, through sustained, inclusive and integrated regional economic development. In the 2016-2017 biennium, 113 out of 113 planned outputs were implemented (100 per cent), and the main results achieved under the expected accomplishments of subprogramme 3 are briefly described below.

Expected accomplishment 1: Member States reform economic institutions and develop and implement policies based on principles of good governance in order to enable economic planning and policymaking in support of inclusive and sustainable development

Results achieved

35. In the 2016-2017 biennium, the support of ESCWA contributed to several policy changes in economic governance in member States. Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates improved their rankings in the Ease of Doing Business Index. ESCWA developed economic modelling tools, including social accounting matrices and computable general equilibrium models, to facilitate planning and monitor performance in some 20 sectors of the economies of several Arab countries.

Expected accomplishment 2: Member States design and implement pro-poor, rights- and evidence-based economic plans and policies towards eradicating poverty and reducing income inequality

Results achieved

36. With the aim of providing practical suggestions to step up Arab efforts towards eradicating poverty in all its dimensions and implementing the 2030 Agenda, ESCWA, in collaboration with the League of Arab States, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, has developed a methodology to measure multidimensional poverty and issued the first Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report. The report provided recommendations towards adopting more pro-poor policies and accelerating implementation at the national and regional levels; it was endorsed by the League of Arab States through a resolution of Council of Arab Ministers for Social Affairs in September 2017. In the 2016-2017 biennium, ESCWA also organized trainings on measuring poverty and designing evidence-based and pro-poor policies in cooperation with the League of Arab States, and provided technical assistance to Iraq, Jordan and Mauritania on poverty measurement.

Expected accomplishment 3: National policymaking institutions develop evidence-based tools to create decent and competitive jobs for men and women

Results achieved

37. In the 2016-2017 biennium, ESCWA organized a capacity-building event with the International Labour Organization (ILO) at the ILO Turin Center, in which 23 participants from Arab countries received training on pro-employment policies. ESCWA also provided support to Bahrain, Jordan and the Sudan on economic diversification, competitiveness and fairness, strategic economic scenarios for 2030 and strategic planning processes, respectively.

Expected accomplishment 4: Member States and regional institutions develop policies and implementation mechanisms towards economic policy convergence

Results achieved

38. In the 2016-2017 biennium, ESCWA offered technical support to member States on the negotiation and conclusion of tax treaties, and on the development of policies and implementation mechanisms towards economic policy convergence. As a result, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have adopted converging instruments for value added tax. ESCWA also provided support to Egypt, Morocco, the Sudan and Tunisia in the elaboration of their accession proposals to the Arab Customs Union.

Expected accomplishment 5: Member States and regional institutions develop plans and policies for cross-border infrastructure, especially in transport and trade facilitation

Results achieved

39. In the 2016-2017 biennium, ESCWA provided technical support to member States through expert group meetings on transport and trade facilitation, intergovernmental sessions on transport and trade, and close follow-up on accession to/implementation of transport treaties and on the establishment of the Arab Custom Union. As a result, nine countries, namely Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, the Sudan and the United Arab Emirates, have registered an improvement in the Logistic Performance Indicator (LPI). Bahrain, Jordan, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have also adopted or developed plans or programmes containing new measures in line with the Trade Facilitation Agreement of the World Trade Organization. ESCWA also helped the Government of Kuwait in its accession to the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation between Arab Countries.

D. SUBPROGRAMME 4. TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION

40. Substantive responsibility for this subprogramme is vested in the Technology for Development Division. The objective is to promote inclusive and sustainable development in member States by building an information society and knowledge economy that leverage technology and innovation in accordance with the regional development requirements and the internationally agreed development objectives. In the 2016-2017 biennium, 36 out of 36 planned outputs were implemented (100 per cent), and the main results achieved under the expected accomplishments of subprogramme 4 are briefly described below.

Expected accomplishment 1: Member States develop or update strategies and policies that leverage human resources, innovation and modern technology towards a knowledge-based economy and information society as the new paradigm for employment and sustainable economic growth

Results achieved

41. In the 2016-2017 biennium, ESCWA assisted member States in the formulation and implementation of strategies and policies to transform their economies into competitive, knowledge-based ones. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Egypt adopted a strategy for science, technology and innovation (STI) for the period 2015-2030, which falls under the country's Vision 2030. In Jordan, the Higher Council for Science and Technology also adopted an STI policy for 2013-2017. The Moroccan Innovation Center is implementing an initiative dedicated to innovation in the framework of the National Strategy for the Development of Scientific Research (Horizon 2025). In its tenth National Development Plan, the Ministry of Planning in Saudi Arabia included a specific component for STI aimed at localizing and developing advanced strategic technologies. The Government of the United Arab Emirates developed the National Innovation Strategy to drive innovation in the social and economic life of citizens. The Research Council in Oman adopted the National Innovation Strategy in 2017. In addition, ESCWA supported the Africa Technology City in the Sudan and the University of Science, Technology and Medicine in Mauritania in reviewing the countries' respective innovation systems.

Expected accomplishment 2: Member States coordinate the implementation of harmonized policies and legal and regulatory frameworks in science, technology and innovation, and information and communications technology, to foster the development of regional platforms and services

Results achieved

42. ESCWA has assisted Egypt, Oman, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, the State of Palestine and the Sudan in setting up national technology transfer offices. Its work has also contributed to the launch of initiatives on Internet governance in Lebanon and Tunisia. In addition, ESCWA has led the implementation of the Arab Internet Governance Forum (IGF) 2020 initiative, establishing a new charter for the Arab IGF process and a second Arab road map for Internet governance. Finally, the first session of the intergovernmental Committee on Technology for Development, a subsidiary body of ESCWA, was held in February 2017, under the theme of leveraging technology to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

Expected accomplishment 3: Public institutions deploy ICT policies and e-government services based on good governance principles, with focus on open government in general and e-participation in particular

Results achieved

43. ESCWA has developed the Government Electronic and Mobile Services (GEMS) Maturity Index, which was adopted by the Arab IGF, to assess the usage of e-government services in the region. It has also provided support for the launch of an Arab e-government council to foster knowledge-sharing among Arab countries on related themes. In addition, ESCWA has supported 6 initiatives on open government, including the e-government portal developed by the National Information Center of the Sudan; "Smart Qatar" implemented by the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Qatar to provide new e-government services; "Dawlaty" developed by the Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform of Lebanon to provide new e-government services; and Jordan's third national action plan 2016-2018 under the Open Government Partnership, launched by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation.

E. SUBPROGRAMME 5. STATISTICS FOR EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING

44. Substantive responsibility for this subprogramme is vested in the Statistics Division. The objective is to strengthen regional and national statistical systems for the production and dissemination of quality statistics for evidence-based policies aimed at achieving inclusive and sustainable development, regional integration and improved governance. In the 2016-2017 biennium, 66 out of 66 planned outputs were implemented (100 per cent), and the main results achieved under the expected accomplishments of subprogramme 5 are briefly described below.

Expected accomplishment 1: National statistical offices implement methodologies in line with good practices and international standards and recommendations

Results achieved

45. All ESCWA member States have adopted the SDG indicators framework, and are at least at the basic stage of implementation of the System of National Accounts. There were 39 requests for assistance in that regard during the 2016-2017 biennium.

Expected accomplishment 2: Stakeholders make greater use of quality statistics and methodological studies produced and disseminated by ESCWA

Results achieved

46. The number of queries registered by the ESCWA statistics database and the number of downloads of e-publications have reached 520 in a selected quarter of the biennium. At least 275 citations and references to the work of ESCWA were registered within the fourth quarter of the biennium.

Expected accomplishment 3: Regional and national statistical institutions adopt agreements and guidelines for the harmonization and comparability of official statistics

47. During the third and fourth quarters of 2016, the Statistics Division facilitated the establishment of two technical advisory groups, one on economic statistics and the other on demographic and social statistics. Using the budget allotments originally planned for ad-hoc expert groups, they provide a more systematic follow up on the needs of national statistical systems in the Arab region. Four strategies were adopted for the harmonization of statistics in the region between ESCWA and the national statistical offices of Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and the State of Palestine.

48. The guidelines that were produced by ESCWA and adopted during the biennium were the training curriculum and toolkit on gender statistics; a core set of sociodemographic indicators; guidelines on national strategies for the development of statistics; guidelines on Islamic banking; and the training toolkit on environment statistics.

F. SUBPROGRAMME 6. ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

49. Substantive responsibility for this subprogramme is vested in the ESCWA Centre for Women. The objective is to reduce gender imbalances and contribute to strengthening the respect of the rights of women in member States in line with international conventions and outcomes of conferences, and encourage the exchange of lessons learned in this field to build a society that guarantees justice without discrimination. In the biennium, 65 out of 65 planned outputs were implemented (100 per cent), and the main results achieved under the expected accomplishments of subprogramme 6 are briefly described below.

Expected accomplishment 1: Member States design and implement inclusive gender-sensitive policies, strategies and plans towards the elimination of gender discrimination and violations of the economic and social rights of women

Results achieved

50. In the 2016-2017 biennium, the work of ESCWA facilitated the design of gender-sensitive strategies, including the United Arab Emirates' strategy on women, peace and security; the second cycle of Lebanon's national strategy for women (2011-2021); and the Syrian Arab Republic's strategy on women, peace and security. As for action plans, ESCWA provided support to Lebanon in finalizing the November 2016 review of its national action plan on women's advancement (2016-2018); to the State of Palestine in finalizing its draft national action plan on women, peace and security; and to the Sudan in validating the final draft of the national action plan on women, peace and security.

Expected accomplishment 2: Member States collaborate on the development and implementation of regional frameworks that are in line with international conventions and outcomes of conferences on the rights of women and gender equality

Results achieved

51. ESCWA has engaged with member States in a variety of initiatives to develop national strategies for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Three regional workshops were held for members of the new Sub-Committee on Gender and the SDGs, in partnership with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the League of Arab States, with the aim of assessing the responsiveness of national women's machineries to the 2030 Agenda. ESCWA also conducted a subregional workshop to deepen knowledge on SDG 5. An electronic platform was launched to serve as a knowledge hub on gender equality, facilitate peer learning and disseminate information among all stakeholders.

Expected accomplishment 3: Member States establish institutional mechanisms that ensure the effective participation of women in decision-making processes

Results achieved

52. In the 2016-2017 biennium, ESCWA engaged with government stakeholders, national women's machineries and civil society organizations to build their capacity in advocating for women's political participation, particularly in Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Four awareness-raising campaigns were also organized for International Women's Day and the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence during the biennium.

G. Subprogramme 7. Conflict mitigation and development

53. Substantive responsibility for this subprogramme is vested in the Emerging and Conflict-related Issues Division. The objective is to mitigate the impact of crises, including occupation, and to address development and institutional challenges associated with ongoing transformations in the Arab region. In the 2016-2017 biennium, 52 out of 54 planned outputs (96 per cent) were implemented, with two publications delayed and implemented by 1 April 2018. The main results achieved under the expected accomplishments of subprogramme 7 are briefly described below.

Expected accomplishment 1: Public institutions develop nationally led and owned governance strategies and policies to enhance their performance and service provision abilities, including monitoring and analysis, particularly in the countries affected by crises and the least developed ones

Results achieved

54. In the 2016-2017 biennium, ESCWA continued its collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme in supporting public sector reform in Iraq. It organized a capacity development workshop in January 2016 on good governance and the SDGs, and a workshop on internally displaced persons and refugees in Iraq in February 2017. These events led to further joint work between the Government of Iraq and ESCWA on the displaced persons' strategy and its integration in a long-term recovery plan for the country. The work of ESCWA on enhancing competencies of civil servants and the workshop it organized in Amman in December 2017 on the subject have fostered the creation of a network of ministries, councils, public administration reform bureaus and human resources development stakeholders, which requested ESCWA to draft a core competencies framework for civil service in the Arab region and develop related trainings. The framework and training modules would then be presented to the network for validation and pursuit at the national level. ESCWA has also received technical assistance requests for further workshops on security sector reform; institutional development and State-building; national dialogue and reconciliation; economic options for post-conflict reconstruction, and transitional justice and gender equality.

Expected accomplishment 2: Member States respond to development challenges associated with transformations in the region through the formulation of nationally led and owned suitable development strategies and policies

Results achieved

55. ESCWA has provided support to the Bassel Fuleihan Institute of Finance for the organization of the Seventh Annual Conference of the Governance Institutes Forum for Training (GIFT)-Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Network of Civil Service Training Schools and Institutes on Governance, Fragility and Sustainable Development, and the Annual General Assembly of the GIFT-MENA Network, which were held in Paris in October 2016. More than 150 participants from 16 Arab countries, 7 European institutions and 11 regional and international organizations debated on development priorities, governance and public action in the region, and on means to reinforce the central role of civil service training. ESCWA has also finalized a three-year programme dedicated to institutional strengthening for recovery in Yemen, which received the endorsement of the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation of the country.

Expected accomplishment 3: Public institutions develop or implement strategies for the mitigation of the negative direct impacts of crises and Israeli occupation, as well as its indirect repercussions on development in the region

Results achieved

56. ESCWA partnered with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to organize a capacity-building workshop on SDGs for Palestinian officials, titled "Partnerships for empowering a future State of Palestine: Sustainable Development Goal 17 and South-South and Triangular Cooperation", in April 2017. An expert group meeting on the impact of occupation on human development in Palestine was also held in July 2017. Participants identified a list of research topics that can contribute to the assessment of the cumulative and multi-layered impact of the Israeli occupation and assist in the formulation of mitigation strategies and policies, in Palestine and the rest of the Arab region. As part of its efforts to assess such impact, ESCWA continued its consultative process with experts, Palestinian officials and other United Nations agencies. In addition, ESCWA contributed to increasing knowledge and awareness about Israeli practices towards the Palestinian people and their impact through several reports and publications that were widely disseminated.

Annex

INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETINGS HELD IN 2016-2017

Subprogramme	Title of meeting	Venue	Date
1	Eleventh session of the Committee on Energy	Cairo	14-16 May 2017
	Twelfth session of the Committee on Water Resources	Amman	22-24 March 2017
2	Eleventh session of the Committee on Social Development	Khartoum	17-18 October 2017
3	Seventeenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics	Cairo	23-24 January 2017
	Eighteenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics	Beirut	20-21 December 2017
	Eleventh session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development (Liberalization of foreign trade)	Beirut	27-28 November 2017
	Twelfth session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development (Focus on Finance)	Beirut	4-5 December 2017
4	First session of the Committee on Technology for Development	Dubai	11-12 February 2017
	Fifth ESCWA Technology Centre Technical Committee meeting	Beirut	23-24 May 2017
5	Twelfth session of the Statistical Committee	Beirut	4-5 April 2017
	Fifth meeting of the Bureau of the Statistical Committee	Beirut	20 January 2017
6	Seventh session of the Committee on Women	Muscat	20-21 January 2016
	Eighth session of the Committee on Women	Beirut	4-5 October 2017
	First meeting of the Subcommittee on Gender and the SDGs	Beirut	18 August 2017
Office of the Executive Secretary	Twenty-ninth session	Doha	13-15 December 2016
	Third meeting of the Executive Committee	Rabat	6-7 May 2017
	Fourth meeting of the Executive Committee	Beirut	13-14 December 2017